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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses educational policies of teacher education in South Africa. The predominant theory of the Afrikaner ruling elite, Christian National Education, and its teaching style, Fundamental Pedagogics, structures schools on an authoritarian, paternalistic framework that perpetuates apartheid. Because teacher education was controlled through departments of education for each ethnic group, all of which were under the government control, the twin purposes of separation and inequality were successfully implemented from the passage of the Bantu Education Act in 1953 until the student protests that began with the Soweto uprising in 1976. As opposed to the Afrikaner universities, the English language universities began to look for ways to contribute towards changing the way initial teacher education was conducted, and towards opportunities for alternative forms of inservice teacher training (INSET). The Soweto uprising significantly accelerated the entry of private agencies into the field of INSET. Four types of nongovernmental INSET programs emerged: (1) those undertaken by universities, always with a research component; (2) those operating under the management of independent organizations set up especially for the purpose; (3) those run by bodies with wider interests for which INSET was but one activity; and (4) INSET agencies that have grown out of local community actions. The development of Peoples' Education and the action research programs developed in some of the universities are described. The most characteristic feature of the action research initiatives in the South African context has been their clear commitment to linking the political and the educational in a concerted effort to stimulate educational and social transformation. (DK)

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ACTION RESEARCH IN SOUTH AFRICA:

CLASSROOM TRANSFORMATION IN A POLITICAL CAULDRON

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ACTION RESEARCH IN SOUTH AFRICA: CLASSROOM TRANSFORMATION IN A POLITICAL CAULDRON

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1. APARTHEID EDUCATION AND TEACHER EDUCATION

The history of South Africa has been characterized, since the advent of colonial rule, by the growing political and economic dominance of the section of its population that is of European descent. While the policy of apartheid was to receive worldwide attention, it was in many ways but the continuation and formalization of policies and practices going back centuries. Its uniqueness lay in the way it gave a particular ethnic focus to traditional modes of domination, exploitation and exclusion. In the post 1948 era, when the National Party came to power on its electoral platform of apartheid, the segmentation of the population into statutory "population groups" was pervasive, and everything that happened to a person was determined to a significant extent by the racial/ethnic label attached to them by the system of legal racial classification. Where one was born, where one lived, where one went to school, what one could earn - and, eventually, where one could be buried, all were intimately affected by one's classification.

In pursuing its apartheid policies, a key dimension of the state's strategies to create the social, economic and political order it desired to put into place was its policies in regard to the provision of social services, of which education was a major one. Two central principles informed the state's policies in regard to social service provision: first, that they had to be segregated; secondly, that they had to be provided in such a way that the power and privilege of the "white" group was extended. Inferior provision of social services for the groups that were not classified white was a deliberate, public and proud purpose of the state. These twin purposes - separation and inequality - were clearly articulated by Dr H F Verwoerd in an infamous speech in the Senate on the occasion of the creation of the Department of Bantu Education in the early 1950's, which Department was to control the educational provision of the vast majority of the population then labelled "Bantu" ("African"). Verwoerd's speech was replete with racist, supremacist and sexist insensitivities:

> The salaries which European (i.e. 'white') teachers enjoy are in no way a fit or permissible criterion for the salaries of Bantu teachers ... the Bantu teacher serves the Bantu community and his salary must be fixed accordingly ... new salary scales for newly-appointed teachers ... will be possibly less favourable than the

> existing scales ... an increase in the percentage of women teachers will bring about a considerable saving.
>
> The Bantu teacher must be integrated as an active agent in the process of the development of the Bantu community. He must learn not to feel above his community, with a consequent desire to become integrated into the life of the European community. He becomes frustrated and rebellious when this does not take place, and he tries to make his community dissatisfied because of such misdirected ambitions which are alien to his people." (Hartshorne 1992:235)

Central to the ideology of the state, and also of its educational policies, was the doctrine known as Christian National Education (CNE). The preamble to the CNE Policy document published in 1948 asserted that "We want no mixing of languages, no mixing of cultures, no mixing of religions, and no mixing of races". (in Christie 1985:160, translated). In brief, CNE reflected the belief that the Afrikaners were the chosen people of God placed in South Africa to civilize and to Christianize the indigenous inhabitants; that this God-bestowed right and responsibility of trusteeship required of the trustees that they educate the indigenous peoples in the life and world view of the Afrikaners; and that the outworking of this trusteeship would be the recognition by the various groups within the country of their own separate nationhood, resulting in the transformation of the land area into a variety of separate states, one for each nation.

Flanagan points out that a study of the articles of the document

> reveals a contradiction between the relativist view which sees each group as having its own beliefs about education, and the argument that the Afrikaners have the right to decide on the formation of groups and are the trustees of black education ... This contradiction is, of course, essential to any ideology which believes in the racial superiority of 'whites', and indeed in the cultural superiority of certain 'whites'. (1991:2)

The educational outworking of the policy of CNE was the creation of separate schools (which started, interestingly enough, with the segregation of Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking white students into separate schools); the differential treatment of schools for the different racial groups in terms of resources; and the domination of all schooling by the ideology of the state. The ideological domination of schooling by the state was also intended to extend to teacher training (both pre-service and in-service) and to the actions of teachers within schools. Again Verwoerd made this transparently clear - "it is obvious", he said, "that the State must obtain full control of the training of teachers". (Hartshorne, op. cit.:235)

The policies of apartheid and its accompanying doctrine of CNE found their educational expression in the phenomenon known as

Fundamental Pedagogics (FP). Fundamental Pedagogics attempts to understand the phenomenon of education by seeking out what are termed its "essences", this by "bracketing" what are deemed by the researcher to be his (and we use the masculine form deliberately) life and world view so that education can be viewed for what it is in its universality, stripped of any extraneous or particular aspects - that is, what is it that characterizes education as a universal phenomenon, once one has stripped it of its local, particular, world-view-distorted aspects? Fundamental Pedagogics derived great power from the fact that it became the dominant educational ideology of the Afrikaner ruling class, and so came to be the exclusive educational offering in teacher training institutions under the sway of government. The Fundamental Pedagogues saw their approach as the only truly scientific one, and all others as un-educational or anti-educational. Claiming to have identified the "universals" of education, they effectively mystified the study of education into a depoliticized activity, failing to see that, instead of identifying "universals", they had simply endowed normal practice within South African schools with the status of scientific truth. Freer captures this well when he argues that

> I think the theoretical model provided by Fundamental Pedagogics is linked to a fairly simple instructional technology, based on formal classroom one-to-one teacher-pupil interaction systems, with an underlying social order that may be categorised as paternal, authoritarian and essentially non-critical. It also lays claim to be apolitical.
>
> Children are expected to follow instructions, to be subordinate and respectful to the authority of their teachers, who are themselves products of authoritarian and well-regulated universities and colleges of education.
>
> The purpose of the school is clearly prescriptive and designed to propagate the Christian National definition of education. In this respect, the underlying theory, the social system, and the delivery technology - i.e. the methodology and organisation of the school - is also well co-ordinated and in harmony. (1984:224)

The central document that governs teacher education and certification in South Africa is the National Criteria for Qualifications in Education, which requires all teacher training courses to comply with certain guidelines. The recent NEPI report on teacher education says that

> Fundamental Pedagogics still dominates teacher education theory in South Africa, and its delibilitating effects are everywhere apparent. The pretensions to scientific objectivity of Fundamental Pedagogics, together with the way in which it is taught, prevent teachers from developing an understanding of the relationship between

> education and the context in which knowledge and understanding are created and shared. Fundamental Pedagogics is intellectually harmful in that it neutralizes and depoliticizes educational discourse, and does not provide students and teachers with the concepts necessary to assess critically its (or any other) claims about education. (1992:17)

While the Criteria place certain constraints on the content of teacher training programmes, it is the autonomy of the various teacher education institutions that is perhaps a more critical factor in determining the extent to which the ideology of Fundamental Pedagogics is enforced. There are 21 universities in South Africa, of which 20 offer teacher education courses. While these institutions are heavily dependent on state funding, they are also all autonomous institutions regulated by individual acts of parliament, and some of them have certainly infused their teacher education programmes with a different spirit from the Afrikaans-language campuses that have traditionally enforced Fundamental Pedagogics. Most significant for the impact of Fundamental Pedagogics on schooling, however, has been the huge influence of the University of South Africa (UNISA), the sole institution permitted to undertake distance education. UNISA, as a prime supplier of teacher qualifications, has also had a great influence via its position of trusteeship over the new, "ethnic" universities set up in the 1950's and 1960's. During their formative years these institutions used the UNISA examinations as the exit-point from their degree credits, so that often by the time a new university achieved its autonomy from UNISA, Fundamental Pedagogics had become firmly established.

In addition to the universities, there are 102 teachers colleges in the country, focusing mainly but not exclusively on the training of elementary school teachers. These are not autonomous but fall under the control of the relevant Department of Education. Thus there are four main blocks of teachers' colleges, falling under the three separate Departments of Education and Culture (for whites, coloureds and indians respectively) and under the Department of Education and Training (DET), the white-dominated Department overseeing the education of the majority "african" population. While the colleges for whites and indians tend to have a degree of autonomy, the DEC (House of Representatives)(the Ministry for coloured education) and the DET hold their colleges under strict control. Similarly, the colleges falling within South Africa's "homelands" also tend to follow the syllabus of the DET. The NEPI report on teacher education has this to say about the present situation in teacher colleges generally:

> Because they are located in the school sector [i.e. run by Departments on the same basis that schools are] and fall under the direct control of their departments of education, colleges are severely constrained from shaping their own policies and practices with regard to governance ... The authoritarian nature of relationships at colleges of education is reflected not only in the

> dominance of departmental functionaries and in the top-down leadership style within the institutions, but also in the pedagogy, which is characterized by lecturer dominance. (NEPI 1992:16)

In summary, teacher training in the great mass of the nation's institutions has been hugely influenced by the apartheid ideologies of CNE and FP, and tends (to repeat Freer's words) to be paternal, authoritarian and essentially non-critical. The universities, however, are not subject to the form of tight control that visitation and evaluation for accreditation purposes follows in the USA, and so within institutions that were not subject to external control by one or other of the Departments of Education, real possibilities existed for a different form, content and process of teacher training. For the most part, these spaces existed only in the historically white English-language universities and the few (white) teacher colleges that had been allowed to enter into cooperative agreements with them.

We saw above how Freer described the harmonious relationship of the underlying theory, social system and delivery technology in the Christian National Education school created by apartheid. However, he says,

> In contrast, within English-speaking Education, no such clearly orchestrated co-ordination is evident ... certainly the English-speaking universities, and probably the Colleges of Education, operate from a largely non-prescriptive and empirical viewpoint that is far removed from the 'moulding' theme of the child as 'adult-to-be', as propagated by the disciples of Fundamental Pedagogics. On the contrary, at English tertiary institutions, the theory propounded is usually focused upon concepts such as child-centred education, which examines the need to foster the social and intellectual development of children in an eclectic frame of reference which aims to produce individuality and autonomy. The political structure within which educational institutions are situated is defined and critically analysed. The technology and the social structure provides for children as active learners, with opportunities for debate and negotiation with their teachers. Yet all this is placed within a national framework that can only be described as paternal, prescriptive and authoritarian. (ibid.:224)

While the above description has focused primarily on the conditions facing pre-service teacher education in South Africa, much the same situation is to be found when one turns attention to the in-service (INSET) field. There is no national INSET strategy or programme; several Departments of Education run short courses aimed at improving teaching, but none of these carry with them any credit or salary benefits. Many of the colleges do, however, conduct programmes for further qualifications, in terms of which a teacher with three years of training, for instance, can add a

further year to move to a different salary scale. The universities, by virtue of their B Ed, Masters and doctoral programmes, are another source of in-service and accreditation for teachers. (The B Ed is a post-graduate, post-diploma, post-experience qualification roughly the equivalent of the standard American Masters degree in terms of the quality of work done).

One problem that has been faced by institutions and organizations wishing to run INSET programmes for teachers in recent years has been the illegitimacy of the Departments of Education in the eyes of the public at large. This has made it politically impossible for such institutions to run programmes in conjunction with Departments or with their support, or to secure release time opportunities for teachers in those Departments. This has seriously hampered INSET - and has, again, left the door open to institutions and organizations with no such difficulty in working with the authorities (usually, again, institutions comfortable with the states's dominant educational and political paradigms).

2. RESISTANCE TO APARTHEID EDUCATION: ALTERNATIVE TEACHER EDUCATION

The policies of the state, however authoritarian its actions and however pervasive its ideology were intended to be, were not allowed to proceed without popular resistance. Opposition to the creation of Bantu Education in the 1950's resulted, some years later, in the banning of the major oppositional movements (the African National Conference and the Pan African Congress) and a period of extreme repression. The re-emergence of the struggle for the school - and for the country - can be traced to the Soweto school uprising of 1976. From that date schools were to play a consistently significant role in the unfolding political drama that eventually was to produce the unbanning of the ANC and the PAC, and the release of Nelson Mandela, in 1990, and the beginning of the final negotiations for the creation of a democratic society. There are indeed few places in the world where schools, as part of an unjust and totalitarian society, have physically and ideologically taken up the struggle against political oppression to the extent that has been the case in South Africa.

The protest march on that winter day in 1976 was organised by an action committee which later became known as the Soweto Students Representative Council and resulted in police opening fire on school children. Within weeks a nationwide uprising was in full swing: the state response to the school crisis, predictably, was to act increasingly autocratically and violently against the broad mass of the population, and certainly against the inhabitants of schools, students and teachers alike. Wave upon wave of boycott and protest action followed, most significantly in the mid 1980's, and gradually the school movement produced allies as trade unions, alongside religious and other social movements, increasingly mobilised their members against the apartheid structures in the country and in the education sector (itself initially led by students rather than their teachers, university lecturers or

parents).

In terms of teacher education, the institutions traditionally aligned with the English-language universities began to look for ways to contribute towards changing the way initial teacher education was conducted, and towards opportunities for alternative forms of INSET. The University of Cape Town (UCT) was the first to explore the possibilities of action research as a form of INSET, a group of faculty members producing a collection of readings under the title Action research: Justified Optimism or Wishful Thinking? (Flanagan, Breen and Walker 1984). Some students were initiated into action research at the Masters level, but the approach failed to win general support within the School of Education at UCT, to the extent that Flanagan had to enrol at the neighbouring University of the Western Cape in order to be able to undertake action research work at the doctoral level.

One thing that the Soweto uprising did accelerate significantly was the entry of private agencies into the field of INSET. In a survey by Bot (1986), some 85 INSET projects were identified, of which only 31 were governmental or Departmental. Hartshorne argues that the differences between the non-governmental and the governmental projects were that the former did not usually lead to formal qualifications. Another important distinction he found was that

> nearly all privately-funded programmes were decentralized, operated locally with groups of schools or clusters of schools, provided support systems for the teacher in the classroom, and increasingly had involved teachers in the planning and implementation of the programmes. (Hartshorne op. cit.:273-4)

Hartshorne identifies four main types of non-governmental INSET that emerged: (i) those undertaken by universities, always with a research component and having a relatively short life (5-7 years); (ii) those operating under the management of independent organizations set up specially for the purpose (such as the Science Education Project [SEP] and the Teacher Opportunity Programmes [TOPS]; (iii) those run by bodies with wider interests, for which INSET was but one activity; and (iv) "a number of INSET agencies which have grown out of local community action involving teachers and others, have a strong community flavour and were initiated at grassroots level". (ibid.:276)

By the early 1980's the emerging resistance coalition was ready to test the state's resolve. In 1983 the United Democratic Front (UDF) was formed as an umbrella organization for some 600 organizations opposing the practices of the white minority government. The formation of the UDF was one of the factors that contributed to effective organised resistance regarding education and rent boycotts (Julie & Meerkotter 1992:1). Stern tests were just around the corner for the fledgling Front and the huge constituencies it represented: further school boycotts were to evoke the final stand by a government now committed to a faith

that it was facing a "total onslaught" (led by foreign communists) and would have to respond to it with a "total strategy".

3. PEOPLE'S EDUCATION AND ACTION RESEARCH

Recurring school boycotts and state recrimination against teachers and students led, in 1985, to the forming of the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee (SPCC) and the convening of the First Education Crisis Conference in Johannesburg in late December 1985. This was the first public forum to give major attention to the emerging slogan of Peoples' Education for People's Power. Peoples' Education was explained on that occasion as follows:

> * it enables the oppressed to understand the evils of the apartheid system and prepares them for participation in a non-racial, democratic system.
> * it contributes to eliminating capitalist norms of competition, individualism, and develops and encourages collective input and active participation by all.
> * it eliminates illiteracy, ignorance and exploitation of any person by another.
> * it equips and trains all people to participate actively and creatively in the struggle to attain People's Power in order to establish a non-racial, democratic South Africa.
> * it allows students, parents, teachers and workers to be mobilised into appropriate organisational structures.
> * it enables workers to resist exploitation and oppression at their workplace. (SAIRR 1985:395)

Very soon the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee had been transformed into a body with wider geographical representation, the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), and it was this body that appealed to students to return to the classroom after the second Consultative Conference in Durban in March 1986. The Conference also elected a People's Education Committee to proceed with the task of developing a new education policy for South Africa. Five national commissions were to be set up (comprising teachers, students and parents) to research and prepare curricula. Dr Neville Alexander, a prominent black educationalist, reacted to opinions that People's Education was a political ploy by warning that

> We should not, I should like to stress, be misled by the inescapable overt emphasis placed on the political aspects of People's Education. That is a peculiarity of the South African situation where a monstrous system of socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural discrimination politicises everything in the highest possible degree. People's Education or Liberatory Education is a facet of the world-wide movement for the democratisation of education, a process which in other countries is often sponsored, or at least tolerated by governments themselves. (1987:59)

The state was soon driven to attempt to reassert its control. In April 1986, the internal resistance movement AZAPO warned that legitimate public opposition by overt organizations was nearing an end and that "wholesale repression reminsicent of the 60's was imminent" (City Press, 6 April 1986). When closing the schools did not help, further measures were introduced. On 14 July Mr Bill Staude, Director of the DET in the Cape Province (one of the country's four provinces), announced that Student Representative Councils would be abolished and that communication with the "Crisis in Education Committee" would end (Eastern Province Herald, 14 July 1986). This announcement was made when the schools re-opened two weeks late to enable the DET to finalize its measures of control. It was at this time (at the end of June) that Mr Zwelakhe Sisulu, Chairman of the NECC's People's Education Secretariat, was detained, and heavy restrictions were placed on a huge number of organizations. It was clear that the state was not yet prepared to attempt to solve any crisis in a democratic way.

During 1986 the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape was busy amending its rules regarding the Masters degree. Previously the only route to this was by completing a major dissertation; now the rules would allow also for study via the so-called "structured Masters" route as well. The "structured" Masters would require a year of coursework study (part-time), followed by the presentation of a "mini-thesis" (a work of between 100 and 150 pages). In terms of the amended general rule, a "structured programme" in action research was introduced, its first cohort of students meeting for the first time in January 1987 (with subsequent intakes in 1989, 1991 and 1993).

We spoke earlier of Freer's distinction between the Afrikaner-dominated teacher education institutions and those with an English-language tradition. The University of the Western Cape (UWC) was the first major institution, the history of which had been rooted in Afrikaner nationalism, to break with its CNE and Fundamental Pedagogics antecedents. In the late 1950's the state, facing increasing demands by other-than-white persons to be admitted to the universities, created a series of ethnic institutions to serve the different "population groups" in the country. UWC was set up to cater for the approximately 10% of the population classified as "coloured" (of mixed race).

In its early days UWC was dominated by Afrikaner Nationalist sentiments and staffed by supporters of government policy. The first Rector ("President") saw UWC as

> an institution of higher education that must be established for coloureds, a university which would provide a thorough academic training and inspire them with the ambition to serve their fellow men. The white guardian was obliged to provide these facilities for his coloured ward (quoted in Samuels 1992:80).

Almost from the beginning there was student opposition - students who failed to acquire the necessary permit to study at one of the

established universities came to UWC "under protest and to protest". As students numbers grew, as the seventies produced growing resistance to the state, and as greater numbers of dissident intellectuals began to be prepared to take up positions at the institution, UWC became an ongoing ideological battlefield. By 1982 the balance of power had shifted, the University Council (its highest decision making body) approving a Statement of Objectives which rejected the politico-ideological grounds on which the University had been established, and committed it to working for the "development of Third World communities". From here the University moved rapidly to becoming the most stringent critic of the state amongst the universities, so much so that the present President, F W de Klerk, then Minister of National Education, sought to destroy the institution by cutting off its state subsidy, and was only prevented from doing so by a ruling of the Supreme Court. The current Rector, Prof G J Gerwel, in his inaugural address, envisioned the institution as the "intellectual home of the left" (Gerwel 1987:2). Samuels (1992:81) mentions the following as features of this vision:

> * the commitment from the institution as a whole to work towards the destruction of the apartheid social order and to contribute towards the formation of a non-racial, democratic South Africa;
> * the identification and development of formal links with progressive political movements within the political community;
> * the democratisation of the internal decision-making processes of the institution; and
> * the transformation of the curriculum.

The Faculty of Education had been one of the earliest schools set up at UWC and one of its most conservative. By the early 1980's a move was afoot to break the Fundamental Pedagogics/Afrikaner Nationalist grip on the Faculty. By the mid 1980's the Faculty was well on its way to a rapid and dramatic transformation, its 1987 mission statement (approved by the University) committing the Faculty to

> The reconceptualization of the faculty's initial training function as one that requires students to become confident and competent practitioners with a critical understanding of education and of the political economy of schooling.
>
> A policy of staff recruitment, employment and development in order to bring together a staff cohort freed from the shackles of conservative political and educational ideologies, sophisticated in critical academic analysis, and representative of the broad spectrum of the South African community, to the extent that it might view itself - and be viewed by others - as a truly South African institution. (van den Berg 1988:25)

The changing of the rules governing the Masters degree, and the introduction of the action research programme, were parts of that broader politico-educational initiative. As this was a degree programme, persons within the Faculty's Department of Didactics also launched an action research project to work with teachers for non-degree purposes, this initiative to be followed by (ultimately successful) moves during 1987 to obtain funding from the Kellogg Foundation for a materials development project. Also during 1987, the Faculty organized a People's Education conference at UWC, officially in collaboration with the NECC, but as this latter body had been all but immobilized by the state, it was really an event organized by the Faculty in solidarity with the principles of the beleaguered organization.

During 1987 the University of Cape Town action research initiative had also strengthened and taken new directions with the launching of the Primary Education Project (PREP), an attempt to "facilitate informed, reflexive action by practitioners as a means to improve the educational context within which they work." (Walker 1989:17). Starting in one school in April 1987, three more were added the following year.

The UWC action research Masters programme had several central purposes: to reduce the attrition rate amongst higher degree candidates and to increase the number of highly qualified black intellectuals; to produce a growing number of reflective practitioners who could serve as a "critical mass" to promote further change in the schools of the region; to affirm and develop "teacher voice" as opposed to the often arid concerns of academics; to encourage collective and politically responsible work; to challenge the dominant research paradigms within the University; and to produce work that was relevant to the everyday concerns of "ordinary" classroom practitioners.

The programme drew heavily on the work of radical North American, British and Australian emancipatory educators. Works by Habermas, Grundy, Carr and Kemmis, Elliott, Eisner and Fullan, amongst many others, were included and continuously evaluated and critiqued in the light of political and educational developments in South Africa. From the beginning, and against the background of the thoughts of the mentioned authors, there was an understanding that we were engaged in an emancipatory form of strategic action to change the oppressive nature of the type of classroom practice so evident in the schools of the disenfranchised in South Africa. It has been up front from the beginning that the purpose of the research in which teachers would take part was aimed at the democratization of their own education situations, hoping that such efforts might promote changes in society in general.

Apart from the nature of the problems addressed and the democratic approach to procedures followed during the coursework phase of the course, the "transformative" character of the Masters came to the fore specifically in the mini-thesis work where the political motivations regarding <u>why</u> students wanted to change <u>what</u>, as well as for <u>how</u> they wanted to change things, had to be given. This, in

addition to applicable educational, sociological and psychological reasons that they might have had for engaging in action to change a particular teaching and learning situation.

In 1989 the curriculum of the Masters was "extended" to include a course in "radical pedagogy" which, together with the action research's focus on the teacher as key figure to bring about change in the classroom and, hopefully, through that in more than the classroom situation only, accentuated the teacher's role as politician and "transformative intellectual" (Giroux 1988:121-8). The programme stressed the view that it is not the "expert" from "outside" that would transform authoritarian practices in schools, but rather the teacher as classroom practitioner. The idea of "transformative intellectual" points to a notion where the teacher is perceived as more than a technician who is to carry out the instructions of those in control of education, schools and classrooms. The teacher who acts and reflects on her practice as a transformative intellectual also participates in thinking and deciding about why and for whose benefit school and classroom practices should be organized.

The aims of People's Education as expressed by the delegates to the First Education Conference in 1985 were to a large extent also visible in the Masters programme, as well as in the two projects established in the Department of Didactics. The link between politics and education in the programmes and a realisation of the necessity for empowering students for democratic participation in a torn and fragmented South African society was, and remains, evident. A significant number of participants in the programmes, and other colleagues in the Didactics Department, maintained a strong relationship with the restricted NECC, this organization being the primary protagonist for People's Education for People's Power over the years. While control over education in a governance sense has always been a central area of focus for the NECC when the issue of People's Power was addressed, the work of the Didactics department accentuated curriculum development and classroom practice.

After the "unbanning" of the NECC in 1990 much emphasis was placed on the crisis in education and the importance of the establishment of a single Education Department for all in the country. Towards the end of 1991, however, it was realised that change in education could not come about on the education governance level only, but that the classroom politics of oppression on the one hand and liberation on the other needed to be addressed. Many activist teachers were of the opinion that democratic rhetoric stemming from political platforms did not necessarily result in the transformation of the authoritarian classroom. Politically very aware teachers were, for example, often autocratic in their own classrooms. As a result of the recognition of the importance of democratic change also in the classroom and school situations as such, the National Executive Committee of the NECC resolved in the second half of 1991 to adopt two projects to further the organization's aims regarding:

* The structural control over education at both a macro and a micro level. This project was named the Education Governance Project and resulted in a national conference held from 31 July to 2 August 1992.
* The importance of bringing about change in the actual classroom situation. This project became the NECC's People's Education Project and resulted in four regional conventions on People's Education and a National People's Education Convention in October 1992. Dr Dirk Meerkotter, co-director of the Action research Masters programme at UWC, was centrally involved in this project as its chairperson.

Thus it was that the People's Education Project of the NECC moved very close to the action research projects associated with the Didactics Department of UWC and with the aims and activities of the action research protagonists at UCT. The aims of the People's Education conventions are also of interest in this effort of establishing the relation between People's Education and the work done around emancipatory action research in the Didactics department. Stated as some of the aims for the conventions were:

* to put People's Education for People's Power back on the agenda of teachers, parents and students when they talk of educational change for a "new" South Africa.
* to redirect the focus of People's Education away from the street struggle for democracy in education to a struggle in schools and classrooms.
* to recognise the role of the teacher as transformative intellectual in the process of democratisation of the classroom without forgetting about the involvement of students and parents in the process.

In spite of the fact that the political agenda and programmes of the NECC have had an impact on the projects of, and courses offered by, the Department of Didactics, it seems as if some of the emancipatory education programmes, especially those that focussed on the role of the teacher as change agent in her classroom, had an important effect on the NECC's People's Education Project. The focus on the teacher results from a view that teachers are able not only to reflect upon and bring about change in the situations in which they work, but also that they might be, because of their positions as teachers, the most appropriate interest group to tackle the challenge of oppressive schooling practices. This opinion was also expressed at the People's Education conventions mentioned above, hence the conventions' stated aim to recognise the role of the teacher as "transformative intellectual" (Giroux 1988:121-8) in the process of democratisation of the classroom without forgetting about the involvement of students and parents in the process.

We are of the opinion that the NECC as a mass based organisation consisting of teachers (the South African Democratic Teacher Union), students (the Congress of South African Students) and university teachers (the Union of Democratic University Staff Association) organizations, did not make a clear enough

distinction between the differences in roles to be played by the different sectors. In the process of democratisation all members (of the organisations) and the organisations themselves were seen as having the same say in educational matters. The idea of everybody in the education sector as a whole having the same worth as human beings, we believe, must be supported and also defended at all times. The point we are making, though, is that democracy in education cannot work on the basis of a simplistic democratic perspective in which the majority (or winner) "takes all". We have, over the past few years, experienced practices in which parents and teachers have often been intimidated and manipulated to such an extent that it was to the detriment of the oppressed classes. It is not suggested that the NECC was responsible for the collapse of a "culture of learning" in educational settings, and neither are we negating the valuable contribution of student struggle to the liberation movement over the years. We do, however, say that the major role that students played in decision-making often outweighed not only that of teachers as an organised sector, but indeed also that of parents.

The participation of students in action and decision-making must undoubtedly also have an outstanding developmental effect on them as young persons. However, we view the present focus of the NECC's People's Education Project on teachers as the most important agents for change in education as very important for the reconstruction of the "culture of learning". The influence that the emancipatory action research related projects initiated by the UWC Department of Didactics certainly made a contribution to these recent developments around the People's Education Project.

4. REFLECTION AND PROSPECTS

The UWC Masters programme can claim to have achieved considerable success when measured against its own aims. By March 1993 twenty-two students had graduated from the programme and the total should reach thirty by the end of the year. No other programme at the University has achieved such a throughput. Also, the activities of the Didactics-based projects has exerted some influence across the country, including even invitations from DET to speak about action research as an approach. What is sobering, however, is how student after student has related, in the mini-thesis, how significantly they were influenced by the authoritarian nature of their own schooling and teacher education. Walker, reflecting on her early work on the PREP project, discusses this at some length:

> Emancipatory educational practice for social transformation must eventually address a fundamental redistribution of power, wealth and privilege in South Africa ... Bantu Education ... has succeeded in legitimating the established capitalist order and the exploitative system of power relations that lies at the heart of racist practices. Such power relations constitute serious obstacles to attempts by educators to build a more just and compassionate social order which

challenges not only entrenched racism, but also the inequalities of wealth in South African society.

> Furthermore. teachers in African schools, even more than their students, are the products of the curriculum content and processes of bantu Education. Research in other countries ... suggests that teacher behaviour is learnt during one's own schooldays and that this school experience is more significant than pre-service training in shaping how one teaches. In their own schooling, DET teachers have experienced a process dominated by teacher talk and the transmission of prescribed "knowledge". As school pupils they were passive and inert, restricted to receiving, memorising and regurgitating the official textbooks. By the end of ten or twelve years of schooling, and a further two years of teacher training, all under the control of the DET, most African teachers will have internalised a particular understanding of teacher behaviour which they then act out themselves in their own classrooms. So the dominance of transmission teaching with its concomitant emphasis on teacher-talk, drill and practice and rote learning continues to hold sway and few questions are consciously posed by teachers regarding what and how they teach, and in whose interests.
>
> How then can teachers of the oppressed become conscious, critical and creative agents in the process of schooling, and so empower themselves to develop a "project of possibility" (Simons, 1987) which recognizes the real and present conditions in black schools, and yet looks beyond the immediate to a different future? In effect, how can teachers begin to realise education in their practice?" (Walker 1989:20)

How indeed? Schooling in South Africa has been severely dislocated for the better part of twenty years, and a great many teachers have no vision of teaching in any way other than that set out by Walker above. Action research work, while seeming to have a huge influence on those who work seriously at it (for which we offer the work of the Masters students as evidence) is also very labour-intensive and slow. What is more, we are also now more sober than we might have been twenty years ago about the ease with which educational innovation can be stimulated - it is a slow, patchy and painful activity. Innovation, when it occurs, says Fullan, is "a fortunate combination of the right factors - a critical mass". (1982:82)

There is also the danger that action research will be taken over by those in senior bueaucratic positions only to domesticate it and distort its purposes and functions. The most characteristic feature of the action research initiatives in the South African context has been their clear commitment to linking the political and the educational in a concerted effort to stimulate educational and social transformation. This, we believe, sets it apart from

similar work done in other parts of the world, Britain, the USA and Australia included.

Our best hope for action research must be that it remains located within its personal, professional and political imperatives for transformation, and that those who are or have been associated with the action research initiatives continue to encourage, sponsor and support attempts to draw teachers into the challenge of transforming their own practice and that of the institutions within which they work.

The UWC action research programme was, first, an attempt to take teacher voice seriously and to focus on their real world in terms of work that could be recognized as worthy of validation by the University - in Fullan's terms, work "which takes into account the subjective reality of teachers". (ibid.:28) It was also a strategy introduced in the face of evidence that disconnected INSET does not work, and that large-scale school-focused work was both politically impossible and humanly unrealistic given the huge workload of UWC personnel. Our hope, as we face major political change (and the creation of a single Ministry of Education by April 1994), is that persons who have been influenced by notions of teacher critical self-reflection will be able to play a part in moves to change the disastrous course that our schooling has followed in recent decades. And we should remain mindful of the fact that quick-fix INSET solutions seldom work - as Sarason reminds us sardonically, "for every problem there is a simple, direct answer that is wrong". (1990:xi)

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